



QUAD

1994



Oil - 31.75" x 48.25"

Kim Lambert - *Insomnia*

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United Chicken Incorporated

Julie Ann Dykes

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. How may I help you? No sir, he's out to lunch - may I take a message? The grill-flavored spray is going to be late? O.K., I'll be sure and let him know. Yes sir, I sure will. Goodbye."

That must've been the millionth phone call I've answered today. I mean, you wouldn't think of a chicken processing plant as one of your more fast-paced industries to work in, but that phone is the busiest one I've dealt with in my career as a temp.

You do know what a temp is, don't you? You know, Kelly girls...and guys for that matter. When you have a task that none of your permanent employees would ever dream of doing no matter what the pay, you call the folks at Kelly and they send one of us to your rescue.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. This is Jackie. No, I'm only a temporary. Beth's been transferred to payroll so I'm taking her place until they find a new one. Yes sir, but he's on the phone. Would you care to hold? O.K. - he'll just be one moment."

This is my first experience in what the Kelly people call a "light industrial" setting. I got kind of scared the first day when I drove past the National Coke Factory on my way to the plant. That place looks like it came out of one of those movies about how life is after they've dropped the bomb. You know, the ones where all the men have mohawks and the women wear iron bustiers. Anyway, the National Coke Factory has all of this really big, weird equipment standing around these monumental piles of rock. It's all gray and black and there's this huge pipe with fire shooting out of it all day long. You can see that flame for miles.

"Thank you for holding, sir; I'm fixing to connect you with Mr. Lawrence."

United Chicken Incorporated doesn't look like that at all. It's all white with the trim and machinery painted bright blue and red. Patriotic of them, wasn't it? They even put cement picnic tables out by the loading docks.

The only bad thing about United Chicken Incorporated is the smell. I can't even begin to describe it. It's like all the smells of a barn got together and committed suicide on the hottest day in August. The worst thing is when you're going to the parking lot and you have to pass this neat little row of stainless steel rat traps. Then that smell just hits you like one of those big rigs that pull in and out of here all the time. What's awful is that I don't even notice it anymore. It's crept into my clothes and then inside my skin. Sure does clean out your sinuses, I'll give it that.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. Oh, hello, sir, how are you today?...If you'll hold one moment, I'll tell Mr. Henry you're calling."

"Mr. Henry, you have a call on line two...you can't take it right now? Mr. Henry, it's Mr. Russell! Yes sir, I'm fixing to connect you."

Mr. Russell is the president and CEO of United Chicken Incorporated. El numero uno, if you know what I mean. He seems very nice over the phone, though.

It's like I was telling Belinda the other day, the phone is the great equalizer. It all comes down to your voice and the other person's voice, no matter who they are. Oh sure, I get a few who try to sound real superior, but in the end, they're probably just peons like the rest of us. Actually, for a peon, I hold quite a bit of power myself: I can put



Plexiglass etching - 13" x 13.75"

Joseph Potter - *Hang On . . .*

whoever I like on hold for as long as I like.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. How may I help you? No sir, he's not in right now. Would you like to leave him a message? That's Mr. Gottfried from Prague? Is that in Texas? Oh - all right. Good-bye."

I just met Belinda last week. She works on line #4 at the Batter and Breeding station. She came into the office to order some chicken and we just hit it off. She's worked at United Chicken Incorporated for a little over two years. She started out in flash-freeze and worked her way up. I think they should make her supervisor over Batter and Breeding; they probably will in a few months. She told me that she gets tired of wearing hair nets and hard hats, though, said it made her feels like a man. I can see where she's coming from, but if I ever ate anything that came out of a place like this, you'd better believe I wouldn't want any stray hairs floating around in it.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. Yes sir, one moment please."

Belinda is the one who told me about the rendering plant. If you can believe this, the rendering plant makes stuff out of the leftovers from this plant. And when I say "stuff," I mean stuff that's actually supposed to be eaten. It sounds a bit far-fetched to me, but I guess if they're going to but all those chickens, they might as well get their money's worth out of them.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. Mr. Lawrence? Yes, hold one moment please...I beg your pardon? Oh, Beth's been moved up to payroll and I'm just temporarily taking her place. Yes, well, we all can't be as perky as Beth was...I'm putting you on hold now."

You see, before Belinda came to the plant, she worked up at the rendering plant in Athens for about six years. That's how she knows so much about it. Bless her heart. She says she actually enjoyed working there...said it gave her a real sense of accomplishment to see how much good, usable stuff could come out of all the leftover parts. In fact, the rendering plant was where she met and fell in love with Manny P. Humphries, who soon took Belinda to be his lawful, wedded wife.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated, how may I help you? Sure, just a minute. Mr. Henry, you have a call on line two...It's Donnette from Smith Equipment. O.K., I'll transfer it."

Apparently, Belinda and Manny were assigned to the same station: Chopping and Mixing. Belinda swears it

was love at first sight, even though she did have on a hair net and those baggy blue coveralls they force all of their workers to wear. She says she was never happier than when she was around Manny. Belinda said part of the reason they got along so well was because they shared so many interests and worked side by side at such a rewarding job. I tell you, it just tears me apart to think about how such a loving relationship had to be shredded to pieces in the blink of an eye.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. No sir, she's moved on up to payroll and I'm just a temporary. You'd like me to tell her what? Her husband's being moved to a different section of Bryce? Room 209? Sure, no problem...O.K....Good-bye."

Belinda's never told me the whole story, but the workers around here all tell stories about how she's taken Mann'y unfortunate death. Some of the girls were sitting around the desk the other day, waiting for their paychecks and talking about it. Teresa swears up and down that Belinda started to hyperventilate when she went over to Teresa's house and saw Teresa using the Cuisinart before dinner. She said that she even had to throw one of those big, brown grocery sacks over Belinda's head to keep her from going to the hospital. Miss Freida, who's in charge of Shipping and Receiving, said that one time while she was going to check on Belinda's parakeets while Belinda was on vacation, she found out the real reason why Belinda insisted on keeping up payments on two industrial-sized deep freezers. Of course, Miss Freida is as nosy as an aardvark to actually look in Belinda's deep freeze, but she still makes a pretty interesting point. Miss Freida claims that the freezers are full of all these chicken patties which were produced on the same date. Miss Freida insists that this date matches the one that Belinda once told her was the day that Manny passed on.

"Good afternoon, United Chicken Incorporated. Yes, hold one moment please."

Well, I don't know about you, but I think we all have different ways of handling grief. Belinda just may not be ready to let go yet. I do know that I'm ready to let go of this day. It's almost five o'clock and I'm ready for it. Belinda and I may be going to dinner at this little restaurant right down the highway near that coke factory. I'll be glad to get out of this smell, too. It seems one hundred times worse today, for some reason.

Sabina and I

Sabina and I
Took a walk down memory lane
Before T.V. was an occupation
And people lived
For that Sunday to do what they pleased.
They fought for this freedom
Our freedom
Don't be a slave.
You can have fun when ever you want
With basic moderation
And respect to your promise
Because we are it, what the fight was for.
And Sabina and I,
Because it is now,
Dance on it.

—Cari Martin



Oil - 35.75" x 27.5"

Leslie Grimes - *Still Life*

Mother Poem

I remember back to the state of Tennessee
to a brown house surrounded by honeysuckle you told me it was OK
to put in my mouth
I remember painting our toenails red in your big bedroom
do you Mother
I get a nervous feverish feeling when I remember
Since then I've seen you grow older than you are Mother
and Birmingham has not proven the best place for doctors or cures
What I mean to say is I used to pray at night beside my bed for
you to get better
and I didn't stop feeling sick about it all when I stopped crying
and breaking valuable things
the many deaths have slowed me down too
Though we can't get back inside that brown house where things
were easy
and I won't be crying for hours in your lap with the TV buzzing
The Beverly Hillbillies
as you talk me away from the boys who chased me home from school
What I'm trying to say is I'm still trying
and I will be big enough one day to make it all so easy
big enough to erect a god who will hold you on her lap with The
Beverly Hillbillies buzzing in the background
and talk you away from all this sickness

—Carolyn Hembree

Scene Shifts

S. Tori Cook

The mood settles over me like a familiar, worn blanket. It is comfortable yet it makes me sweat. I am used to it by now but something still makes me want to shrug it off. I gather about me the usual tools: the pastels so I can create a picture of how I feel: the parchments, the ink pens, and the charcoals, and yet only ballpoint pens and scraps of notebook paper are used in the end. I cannot create pictures, I should know that by now. I can only create word images. Imagine this picture as if it were created by a master— someone who can take feelings and emotions and translate them into visual images. If I were that master, I would create this image for you:

On bright days with scattered clouds – light and free – and warm breezes, I would be a nymph, blond hair long, wild and free. I would be naked, swimming in a crystal clear pool of water, cool on my warm skin, at the base of a misty waterfall. All around the pool the green woods would climb up the slopes thick with vegetation and devoid of humans. The breezes would blow new life into the trees and stir birdsong with every gust. Harmony would be evident with every glance and every scent on the air. No thoughts would escape except for freedom, love and peace. No words would dare be uttered save “you” and “us” and “we.” The only actions would be the movements of hearts at play and whatever was not planned.

On cloudy days, I would appear as a refugee, wild of hair and eye, looking for a place to hide. The dirty, dark buildings around me would be threatening yet have an allure all their own. The shapes in the dim light would shift, at one time beckoning and calling, at another sinister and foreboding. My attire should have been restrictive were it not in such a state of tatters. A haunted look in my eyes would show the terror of my past and of my internal turmoil that chases me to such a forsaken land. The threat-

ening storm bears a strong resemblance to the approaching event in my life, whatever it might be.

Some days are confused. The refugee is exalted to suddenly find herself in the utopian surroundings of the waterfall. The security and haven she sought in the dark town is suddenly within her grasp, but the cool, clear water abruptly refuses her wild, harried form. Her dark, tangled hair whips painfully against her face in the breeze that seemed so secure, and the water muddies around the reflection of her tattered clothing.

The nymph finds herself suddenly gawked at and vulnerable in the confines of the dark, impersonal town. Gone are the serene whispers of “us,” drowned out by the surrounding cries of “I” only barely audible over the rumble of thunder. The green hillsides of the woods are replaced by dark, straight forms too closed in to be at all natural. Panicked thoughts of fear, hatred, and discontent are ripped from within her as her self-peace crumbles and falls with her tears.

The nights are all that remain constant: the closing of eyes to the needs of refuge to look once more upon sweet dreams of free hearts. Peace surrounds me – for here it is only myself, laid bare of mind – like a familiar, worn blanket, yet the peace is fleeting. Once it is in place, the blanket begins to suffocate any prior thoughts with needs of its own. My form is hidden beneath its many folds and convolutions. The desire for a free peace is folded up in the reality of cloudy days and thunder-filled dreams. Taunting voices promising an “us” convulse around truthful scripts that say only “me.” The need to reproduce that picture within wells up inside me as I scramble for a parchment and tray of promising colors only to produce black and white scribbles creating only more wishful dreams and useless fantasies. Q

Tea Party

High on the shelf of my closet,
Sat there in a brown paper box,
Full of the tinkering, glimmering voices
Of scenes only made by a child or a fox.
High on a chair, and up on my toes,
I reached with all the strength that I had.
And touching its corner a shiver ran through me;
I'll tell you my tale, though it's sad.
In a moment of timelessness all dreams and schemes
Went crashing with me to the floor.
Memories shattered in pieces around me;
And could never be found in a store.
And yes I was bleeding, from more than my leg,
And though I was crying refused to get up—
How long could I go on staring at childhood?
The remains of which only equaled one cup.

—Cari Martin



Solarized Photograph - 10" x 8"

Greg Hand - *Staring At the Sea*

My Alabama Summers

- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
The shiny forehead of the Governor
squinting through sweaty rivulets pouring into his eyes
like the Tombigbee emptying through the delta
Trying to see past the wavy incandescence
to a new state that had to be cleared
After Jackson notched his way through
1819
- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
that watched 200 slaves creep through the black
dirt of a white Greek field empire
Revived to create mirages of gentlemen and ladies
and the court of King Cotton
in acropolitian manors
that wearily shimmered
in the oppressive heat
1840
- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
that hid my great aunt (fifth removed) by the well
when the railroad irons
were twisted around the pecan trees
when Daddy didn't come back
when home wasn't brought back
1865
- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
of reconstructed sickly turpentine
yellow haze
80,00 burning acres
of buzzing hacked pocked chopped
the family's Sunny South timber. Rough hewed
1900
- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
that revealed pale perspiration on sundresses
and drenched degrees from the University and Columbia
"if you give your children an education, they need
nothing else"
Slaves and timber bought
straight A's for Great Grandmommy
1928
- I inherited the sweltering of an Alabama summer
Steering clear through Montgomery in Fleetwood
Stepping on it
to pass the buses
as black angry clouds
fumed from their tails
hurrying back home to where everything was in its place
1963
- I hadn't learned of those sweltering Alabama summers
when I played with the seersuckered octogenarian
when I begged the hero's adventure
when I ran the blood-red hills
when I climbed a magnolia baroque fugue of hands
1978
- But now I feel
the sweltering
of my family's timeless embrace.

Manure Miracles In Mentone, Alabama

Superstar Shit Shoveller
Ann and her mothball-musty,
mowed-over man, John,
Own the place,
Manure's Us
In the scenic mountains of Mentone, Alabama.

Folks say miracles steam up from
The summer-soiled horse trails.
Ann'll tell 'em otherwise.

"It's that glorious, God-given gift of healin'
Droppin' down on me!"

The natives notice the stench in her dung-stained trousers, though—
A "marvelous mess o' miracles,"
Delivered to the toe-peekin' tips
Of her crusted, treadless Tretorns,
Starvin' to be shovelled up and
Dumped on the next payin' sucker
To stumble down Miracle Lane.

—Ashley Hamilton

The veil of long leaves
brushes aside as I guard
my ears against the cracking
willow whips. Her whispers
trace through the canopy,
the rain beads sliding down through my fingers.
Windswept willows lash
frayed ropes at us
as we fold our bodies
against the rain.

—Mike Simpson

The woman invades the room
clenches her worn
purse and slips
between two half-drunks
Balancing her weight
on the edge of the wood seat,
she holds her tongue
close while whispering
some gibber across the bar
about her out-of-work
husband. Pulling a few dollars
out of the purse she lifts
her bruised face, inquiring
the amount she must pay.
She pays her husband's tab
giving the bartender a few extra
dollars for cab fare;
she doesn't need her husband
to walk
in the rain.

—Mike Simpson



Oil - 24" x 30"

Minjana Paukovic - *Age of Innocence*

Black Holes

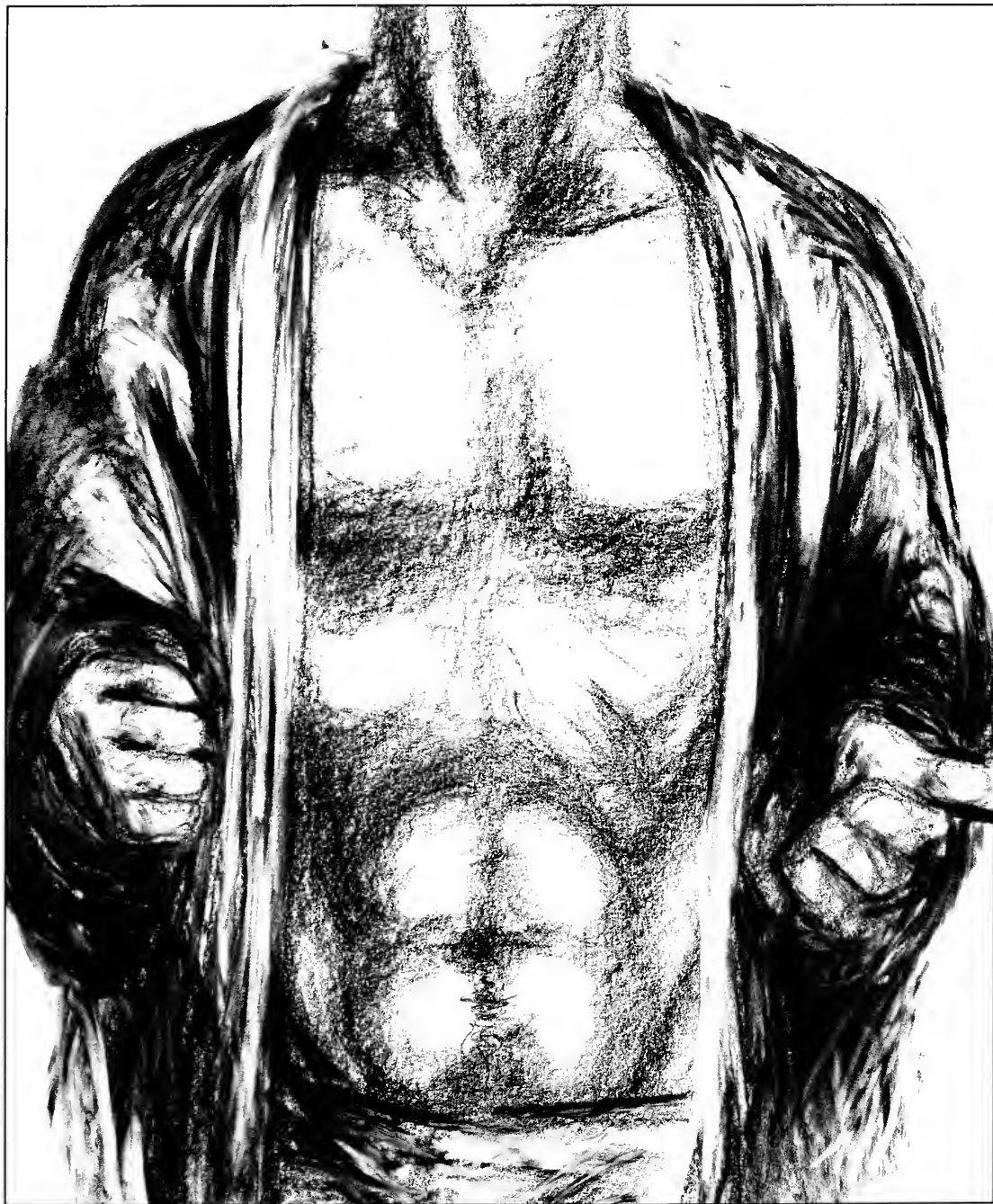
(A Satire)

A search for identity is a search for its loss.
Do you believe me?
Please take me home.
Mice live in holes. Mickey Mouse doesn't live in a hole.
What are we going to do tonight? The same thing we do every night. Try to
take over the world.
People live in houses.
Mice don't always live in holes.
The end of the world is now and never.
A new car is not a used car.
A new car may be used to test-drive people.
People are manipulated by the cars she used to drive.
A tent is a mystical thing; but only because it is a form of hole, kind of like an
ear.
A steak is a dead cow, which was raised on grass.
Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me.
Gem clips are not for the faint of heart, mind, or stomach.
A printer does indeed print unless you tell it to.
A few good men can also be gay. A gay man can be a few good men.
San Francisco has many people. They probably don't know each other by
name.
Run, rabbit, run. The mouse ran up the clock.
A stick is not a shück. It is a long piece of bark with a creamy moist, interior.
You cannot have sex where you have a good run of strikes.
Only Michael Jackson can be president. He is dead.
Stick tape holds together the world by the seams. They might be frazzled.
Nose drops go from your head to your toes, and then back again (but you'd
never know it to see them eat).
Open. Shut. Open. Shut. Please don't open anymore. The hole might fall
in.
If a cord is a length of rope or something, why is a chord both a line segment
and musical notes?
Without California, there would only be 49 states and a hole near Reno.
Snow falls, and so do old ladies when they die.
Mickey Mouse is Donald's best friend. Pluto guards him from harm.
Thank you, and enjoy the show.
Holes are nothing; therefore, they do not exist.
Neither do vacuum-packed pickles.

—Jonathan Edwards



Charcoal - 23" x 28"



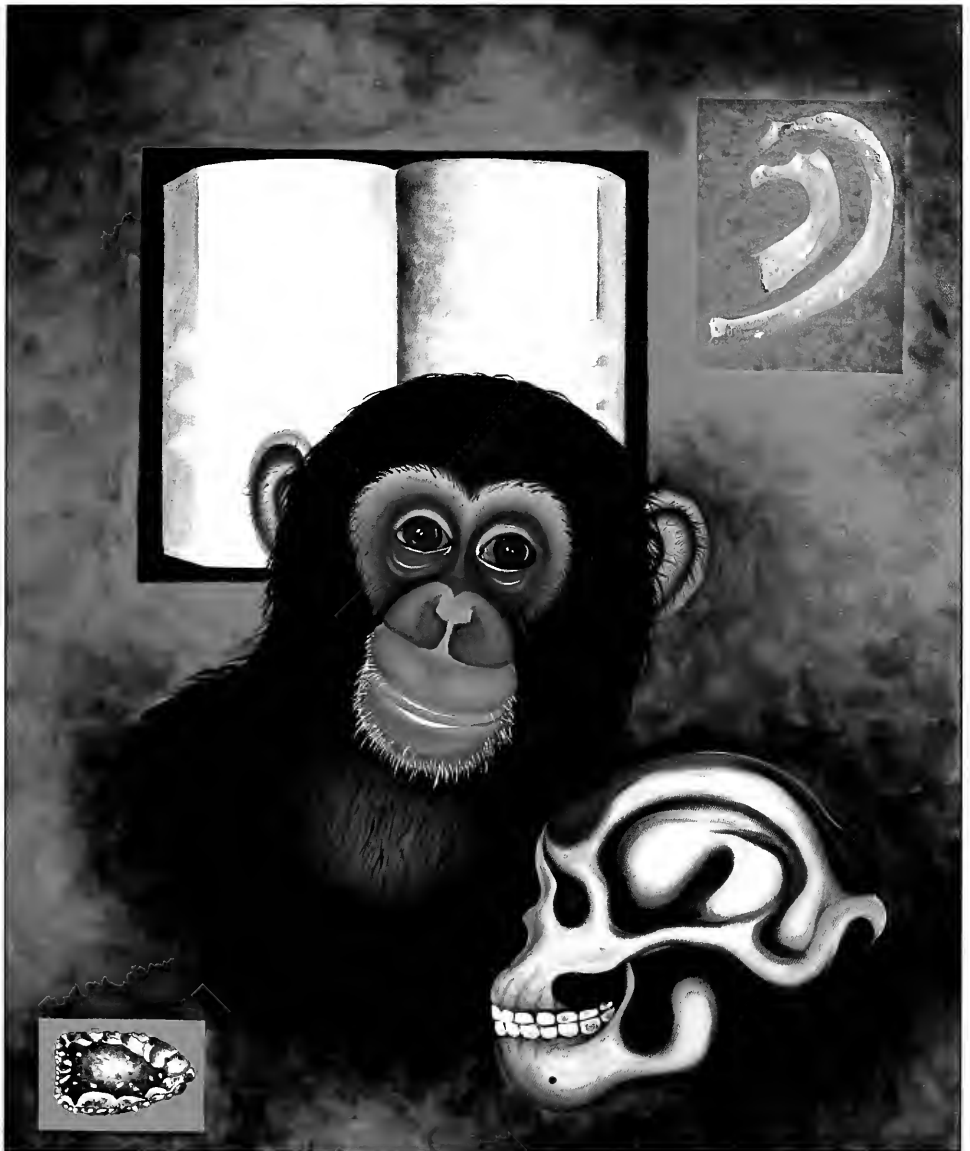
Allen Peterson - *Consciousness Diptych*

the hole encircling this white moon—
encircling me
woman
link undeniable: we string the waves. ocean is ours.
her voice weaves in and out
through and through me
silken scarves gently lifted
the openings give way, softly softly
murmurings of those before time
the whispers, the hushed
voice of her
echoing vibrating
petals (are they of the violet, bruised
and throbbing, the succulent, the dripping,
the fruit of the flame?)
yes: she ascends
swollen belly aching with creation
“mine, this; mine,” she screams
within
liquid coursing, liquid crimson
liquid viscous and pulsing—
velvet blanket of life so alive
it is nearly
death
it breathes too heavily, too yearningly
onto my own life, my own neck
my own skin, the breasts—
why must i know too well too well

—Leslie Nuby

why did we rain and swallow
faintly speaking swaying willow
trees depress like pale faceless
faces
why did we clasp our numb hands
in love swimming fishes are
healing themselves with switchblade
crucifixes
why did we cry and whisper
in cars
words we knew were worn
we ascended from sheets with cruelty
we hate and are each other
aged coldness visits us
the coldness of something we named love
as if we patented the emotion

—Leslie Nuby



Oil - 20" x 24"

Derek Licina - *Heaven and Earth*

Out My Window

I want to drive nails into the eyes of the unbelievers
Not so that they might see,
but to show them the pain of Knowing.
I want to rend the jaundiced hem of reality
So that I might

collapse

my enfeebled soul
and force it through to a birth of new understanding
Not a Utopia, but a burning oblivion of light..
That I could

drop

out of this life
Making a perfect three-point landing
In the lap of God.

—Rich Partain

If God Came Down In the Waffle House

I sat at a fake wood table
with a fake smile.
Two girls, two guys and not one
couple at the table.
We sat and watched the night turn so dark
all it could do was become day.

Over my abstract plate of cholesterol
against a background of black velvet
I noticed them. Two angels.
One tall and blonde
the other a big baby in
a purple outfit stained with childhood.

Words like daggers began to fly
"If they were my children..."
"If I were their mother..."
The words fell dumb around me
All I could do was stare.
Had I seen these children before?

Were we once introduced by
the side of a milk carton
or on the wall of the post office?
Were they the faces I pass
leaving the grocery store?
I want to remember you.

Their mother wandered into
the light of the Waffle Home as if
driven and not by choice.
Reeking of a rough life
and wearing all the accessories
of that old ensemble, her past.

Words spoken fall on ears
of stone and mix with the giggles.
The older child laughed
at our antics the baby laughed
out of the purity of her youth.
Pure tears of joy fell.

With a full stomach and wondering mind
I left the cholesterol factory.
If next we meet will it be in heaven or
on the side of a milk carton or
over the stamp machine at the post office or
the six o'clock news?

"Many have entertained angels unaware."
Somehow I was aware.
If GOD
 came down
 in the Waffle House
He would probably bring two lollipops.

Lumber

Blair Huddleston

The Summer of 1993 wasn't particularly fun while it was happening, but as I think it over, I remember it being insanely pleasant. Since I was not going to go to summer school, Mama said I had to go to work and work was what I did. Being long-haired and not famous, there weren't too many jobs in the greater Montgomery area that I could get except for some form of hard labor. Having not been fired from the job I had the previous summer, I went back to Coats Lumberyard and asked for my old job back. I didn't know how the fellahs at the lumberyard were going to take me coming back for a second summer, but they welcomed me back with open arms and gave me my working name. I knew they had accepted me when they called me Lawyer. They all wanted me to become a lawyer like my dad and get off the road to Hell paved with fruity haircuts and wailing guitars.

Slinging lumber and sheetrock at Coats Lumberyard would be my employment for the long hot summer. Coats Lumber yard was the remains of what used to be one of the oldest and largest lumber distributors in Central Alabama. The people I worked with resembled the lumberyard in its total deterioration, but they taught me more about life than I could ever get from a book or learn in a class.

My job began at six o'clock in the morning and lasted until between four and six in the evening. Since I had worked there for two summers I received a promotion. I got to drive a delivery truck, a white 74' Chevy with "8086 L.B." haphazardly painted on the side. There were two trucks in service at the lumberyard – one white and one green – and neither of them were fit to drive on a dirt road, let alone to haul two hundred pieces of 4x12 sheetrock down I-65. The trucks were so old and so loud that every time I drove past a parking lot, people's car alarms would sound. I can remember at least three times being pulled over by the State Troopers and the Montgomery County Sheriff and being told that I would be going downtown in a black-and-white taxi cab if they ever saw me or the trucks on the road again. The people I

worked with all tended to have a loose grasp of reality and had trouble distinguishing between right and wrong and law-abiding versus lawlessness, just like the trucks they drove.

Mr. Red. Dirty Red was the owner of the lumberyard. His nickname was "El Cheapo" and that's how he took care of business. He was a fiery old man that truthfully said "Goddamn" every time he opened his mouth. Being eighty-five and sporting a two-pack-of-Kools-a-day habit, Mr. Red didn't have too much to lose except a megafortune he had made over the years. He was the strongest man I had ever seen. Even in his advanced years, Mr. Red could outwork me and the three others who worked at the lumberyard. He had a gleam in his clear blue eyes as he would work me yelling, "You gotta' give a little bit of ass Lawyer, I gotta' have some of your booty, yes sir." And as always, he added "Goddamn" at the end of every sentence he spoke. He was the kind of person who loved hard work. His favorite thing to do was to cuss and carry on and tote sheet rock during the hottest days of the year. Always being the first one to give a little ass, he was always in a hurry and I can remember him almost every day saying something like, "Like a tumbleturd, dis' shit's got to roll," or "Like a stone turd dis' shit's gotta rock". Constantly working hard and fast through the years, Mr. Red had skin that resembled an elephant's and forearms that were affectionately referred to by all of the workers in the lumber community as "Mr. Red's African Soup Bone." Mr. Red worked us all at the lumberyard with a gentle iron hand.

Us. That was me and the three people I worked with during my days of fun in the sun at the lumberyard. There was Jimmy, Wiley, and Haley. All of them were over sixty and had worked at the lumberyard all or most of their lives. They were all a little off center by normal standards. One day Jimmy said, "You know the Lawyer know short peoples, tall peoples, fat peoples, skinny peoples, black and white peoples, and the orientals; and the Lawyer's been to college, so he knows them freaks



Solarized Photograph - 8" x 10"

Hank Gravel - *La Ceiba Tree*

too. But the Lawyer ain't never seen none freakier than the niggers at Coats Lumberyard." The people I worked with had a totally different view on life, one far greater and stranger than anything I had ever thought about. Because of my young age, they all felt as if it were their duties to tell me of the hardship and certain strange pleasures of life. Jimmy. On the upper and lower yards where the lumber and sheetrock were stored, he was the boss. They called him "The Straw." He was sixty-three and had worked at the lumberyard for around forty-five years. He was a strong skinny man, but the look in his eyes led you to believe he was capable of extreme violence with a piece of lead pipe. Even though he was always talking shit about all the girls he had slept with and all the good meals he had at Morrison's Cafeteria, he was the smartest of the bunch. The Straw had a strange affinity for pornography and enjoyed telling us every detail of the movies he saw on his home satellite dish in Tuskegee. The ashamed look he got in his eyes while telling about what he referred to as "the sex pictures" made me deduce that he had been caught masturbating more than once in Macon County. Straw was totally different when we were alone. He wanted badly for me to follow in the footsteps of my dad and every other person on that side of the family and become a lawyer. He told me to study the books and stay away from bad men and even worse women. The Straw in his age had become warped by hard work and little return, but he meant well.

Wiley was my drinkin' buddy. Wiley, Baby, Mr. X were all his names. Mr. X was the ladies' man of the bunch with his good looks and skinny body. He was also good with the razor in his pocket and said he was not afraid to cut anyone who got in his face from "asshole to appetite." Twenty-two years of his life had been given to that lumberyard and he only made five dollars an hour. He didn't talk much and when he did I rarely understood what he was saying. The only things I could understand him say were when he would asked me for a smoke or wondered if I'd give him some money so he could get us a twelve pack of Budweiser for the morning delivery. I can remember many a morning polishing off a six as our dilapidated green truck barrelled down the highway. There was a strange link between me and Mr. X even though we didn't talk much. We were both left-handed and both born on August 6. It was almost like we could read each other's minds. Wiley had what Mr. Red referred to as a "fuck-off streak a mile wide," and every time he would miss work, I'd have to do all of his work and mine. I also knew when X would steal from me, but I didn't care because it was stupid stuff like booze and cigarettes. Mr. X was the coolest of the crew. No matter how hard he got

worked he never broke a sweat, never.

Finally there was Walter Haley or Haley Walter, I don't know. He was the oldest of the crew at sixty-eight. He was relatively fat compared to the everyone, looking like Muddy Waters and having a deep, bellowing voice that sounded of hard times and cheap gin. Usually he sat around in the shade on a bunk of 2x12s with a content glaze in his eyes as if he were scanning the hot horizon of the lumberyard for the last time. The weapon of choice for Haley was a thrifty steel blued Saturday Night Special revolver nestled in an old Tampa Nugget box on his front seat. Laziness was Haley's forte, but sometimes he would work pretty damn hard too. Haley's big job was driving the white Chevy with "8086 LB." on the side on morning deliveries. Mr. Red every morning would tell Haley to dodge the law because Haley was sixty-eight, driving an unsafe truck, and he had diabetes. He wasn't supposed to drive because sometimes when he wouldn't have enough sugar in his old blood he would pass out while on the road. This would make for quite an interesting time to me the passenger and the other drivers on the road.

My life was sometimes pretty precarious at the lumberyard. Whether it was a blownout tire because Mr. Red was too cheap to get a new one, or almost having a whole bunk of 2x4 studs fall on me or even being sexually propositioned by a crack head outside the gates of the lumberyard for the price of fifty cents, I never once thought about quitting the lumberyard. In fact, I almost had tears in my eyes the last time I "hailed ass" from the lumberyard gates and everybody waved goodbye to me through the raised dust. A lot of things happened to me that summer that weren't all good, but they were necessary. I learned that nothing was going to be handed down to me just because of my family and that I was going to have to work for everything I had. Playtime was over. I also learned that I was a relatively good person, but just being acknowledged as one didn't give me a lifetime membership. Also, I learned that life and people are pretty damn crazy and you can't escape it: maybe I don't want to. At first I wasn't too happy about having the caliber of friends such as Mr. Red, The Straw, Wiley, and Haley, but I have realized they are some of the best friends I have ever had, in a manner of speaking; they gave a damn. High school was a place where they taught me everything I wasn't supposed to be and I thought after graduation that I was a man and I bought into the high school lie. But the lumberyard was where I really became a man, because I realized and they told me I could do anything I put my mind to and if I messed up at college, they would keep my job warm, ready, and waiting for me at Coats Lumberyard.

Q

Come Over Me

You
Walking (here he comes)

your cranberry mouth
the color of your shirt,
you spin close and dewey towards me.

I watch blinking
sugar
in my eyes.

Twilight floating in
and all that light
seeps soft into your skin—violet.

You
wings beating I touch your back—
your mouth moves all liquid
as the softness of your head
spills into my lap.
you want some
picture some girl
gasping prayers I shake:

I am not what is wrong here

Oblivious in your sunlight you
drift on on on.

So I follow
kissing peppermint teeth
quietly bleeding
from fingers fluttering
in your hair and
in your mouth.

Darkness swirls complete now.
you glowing lamp
star
cigarette.

It's late again
you cling to me
I swallow.

You
say stay and never leave
arms wrapped around
I sink inside
and as I drive away (oh god just
turn around)

that ache of loss
trailing tongues down my neck
my lips mouth
worship sparkle.

So here I am (and I miss him)
and
to hear your name
I shake.

Boys with their hair and torn jeans

so pale so fucking pale
if one had your name
I'd surely try to love him.

—Emily Wright

Body Worship

I.

Such wonder
in an eye (polished stone)
filtering untruths
shedding light
sometimes mercy
Look down upon the crown of the servant
This gaze will:
peace extend
love inspire.

II.

Whirling turning
flick of the tongue
the blink
of an eye
I kneel
Breathless
kissing toes of marble
hands of glass
Reach to lips
(steady now)
full and sweet and plump with wonder
kissing knees
arms upstretched
Lovely Golden Graven
Image.

III.

Walking by day
in the material
longing to tread by night
in your kingdom
This day my scratched burning feet
ache
for the cool marble streets
of this, our
City of Darkness
It's crystal fountain
wavering reflections
of hand mouth eye

—Lisa Green



Chalk pastel - 19" x 25"

Julie Gibbs - *Irving In My Wheelbarrow*

After Viewing John Millais' *Ophelia*

Your mane of tight curls
are finally loosed, spread
across the cold stream.
The flowers you gathered
float, some wound
into the folds of your dress.

I wrap myself inside
a single lock of your hair;
your imagination has escaped
into the active water,
diluted, now plausible.
I wet my fingers
against yours and notice
myself splash into your palm.
I sink with you
beside the stream
and view our reflection
from underneath the surface.

she's found me
more than once
setback in the sun
and given me those
same flowers:
baby's breath and tulips,
all the colors of Denmark.

they spilled
onto the floors
of my room, hers,
and the hallway
between;
the only decor
that seemed appropriate:
vibrant, kaleidoscopic,
temporal.

Now we are together
as you wished,
and I secretly.

—Mike Simpson

The Proposition

No thank you
I'm quite content
at home.
alone.
With books and cats
and shelves of things
And clocks that tick like night.
No thank you, though
I like you still,
And will not frown
As you go by.
I'm quite content
at home.
alone.
To sit and stare
And breathe the air
That fills my lungs,
And mine
alone.

—Cari Martin

China Cat Sunflower

"Look for a while at the China Cat Sunflower."

You know where to find her,
The diamond-eye jackal.

Hard to exist—
Stabbing, starved grass,
Running scarce with a sickened sun,
Along the stagnant streets
That are metacarpals in the mind,
Fingering flows that drive through.

Papery white lights starch China Cat,
Sucking on her,
Stiffening her fragile frame,
'Til her golden skin liquifies,
Trickles down the drain.

Rejuvenation in Chinese rice paddies.
No more razor wire.
Still easy on the ethnic jokes.

Slide in under her.
Ring the silent bells.
"they jingle in the midnight sun."
Beneath the pearl drop petals,
Tickling the smile in your stomach.

Watch the one-eyed calico calling
Through the lacy sheath.
Don't stop to wonder
What the delicious dreams are all about.

—Ashley Hamilton



Color Photograph - 10" x 8"

Brian Patz - *untitled*

Grey Coveralls

Audrey Duke

He is thirteen years old and wears grey coveralls every day to school. I was naive and did not realize that this was a sign of gang activity. In school, the bandanas, the athletic jackets and caps, the beepers, and the hand signals are all against school rules. If caught, the offender is punished with two days of out of school suspension.

Expression is slowly being stripped away from all students in an attempt to cut down on school violence. The teachers know all of the statistics. The fights, the knifings and the murders are filed away in everyone's brain. I am told by more experienced teachers that it does not matter, that they know anyway. It does not matter whether you are in or out of school. They know your true colors. They are the three different gang divisions in the area. Their graffiti is all over abandoned buildings. The noise of their guns echoes through the air on otherwise quiet nights.

He's one of the smartest students in my last class of the day. He is never absent and he is always helpful. I like his sense of humor, and his insight into the subject matter is often amazing. I feel like he could have a very good future in front of him, if it were not for those grey coveralls. The other students listen to him because they like him. He has their respect. It's second semester, and he has my respect, too.

I discovered in mid-October what the coveralls meant. I always wondered if maybe they were all he could afford. I wondered if he lived in the nearby projects. I looked up his address in the records, but did not recognize the street.

We are told by the principle not to wander through the neighborhood. We are told not to go to students' houses. We are also told not to stay at school too long in the afternoons, and never to walk out of the building alone.

This violates everything I was ever taught in college education classes. When the bell rings at 3:00, the teachers leave in a herd, their hands empty except for a purse, or a lunchbag, and always clutching their keys as they lunge into their cars and leave the neighborhood half crouched down in their seats.

Five years ago, a teacher was shot and killed as he left school late in the afternoon. Another shooting later that same day led the authorities to suspect a neighborhood gang. No one was ever arrested for the crime, and it was filed away in an illuminated police office somewhere under Gang Activity. The fear that gripped the school, especially teachers and administrators, has only slightly subsided in the time that has passed since the incident.

Another teacher told me the significance of the grey coveralls. My student's older brother is in the same gang. This brother has already been in juvenile court twice for vandalism and theft. There is another brother, ten years old. He was suspended from elementary school in late September for bringing a beeper to school. He was the eighth person in his school to be suspended since the beginning of the school year. My student has never been a problem for any teacher, but I get the feeling that I am supposed to give up now, that there is no chance that he will ever succeed at anything legal.

I did not want to believe it. I wanted it to be a figment of someone's imagination. The fear of gang violence runs rampant through the halls of this school. Blame for anything that goes wrong in this school is heaped on it. I did not want my favorite student to be a part of this fear simply because of his family and those grey coveralls.

Soon after, he came to my room during my break. Sometimes students come in to chat or to study. I am the youngest teacher, the new kid on the block, and they like

to try to get me to talk about myself. It has become almost a game, and I enjoy it, because we all laugh. The first question is always about my taste in music. I give them a hard time about their rap, because I do not understand it. They ask me if I listen to disco or country. I learn through these discussions that their idols are Ice-T and Public Enemy.

My student is the only one in the room. He would like some help with one of my assignments. He opens his backpack (bringing backpacks to school will be against the rules by second semester) to find a loose sheet of paper, and I see a black bandana peeking out of the top. Unknowingly, stupidly, unbelievably, I pull it out. He jerks it out of my hand and shoves it to the bottom of his bag. I stare at him. I do not know what to say. He says it for me.

"You shouldn't have touched that," he says. I interpret pride and shame in his eyes.

He leaves the room before I have a chance to remind him that he is in violation of school policy.

That afternoon, he does not say a word in class. I ask him to stay after for a moment. I have no idea how to handle the situation. I tell him that bandanas are against school rules. I ask him point blank if he is in a gang. I tell him I am concerned. He mumbles a response that I do not hear. When I ask him to repeat his answer, he says that he is sorry, but that is none of my business. He cannot look at me when he says this. Then he tells me what I already know, that I do not understand. That they live all around him.

I tell him that maybe I should talk to his mother. His eyes plead no, and he says that she works all day. I ask him not to bring the bandana to school, and say that he may leave. He says "yes ma'am," but I do not believe him. I sneak out of the school because all the other teachers have left.

That night as I look over essays, I see that another of my students has copied her two page essay out of an encyclopedia. She has written every *c* in her essay backwards, and every *r* is capitalized. I already know what this means. She is showing disrespect to one gang by writing every *c* backwards, and is showing her allegiance to another gang by capitalizing every *r*. I start crying in the middle of *Roseanne*. I do not know what else to do.

I put the episodes behind me and did not look back. My student was once again diligent and eager to learn. I

noticed though that for a while he avoided my room other than class time. Towards the end of first semester, he returned shyly to ask a question regarding homework. I treated this as if nothing had happened. By this time I am starting to learn from students and other teachers that the gang is the law. It sounds like a cliché, but it is not. It is very real to these people. Children are caught between working parents trying to protect while absent, and gang members who are always hovering and enticing.

It is almost the end of basketball season, and I go with another teacher to one of the high school basketball games. The two of us are walking to the gym, and I see my student in the halls with a couple of other guys. We walk past them and I stop to say hello. He ducks his head and begins to mumble. The teacher I am with urges me forward. I think that I must have embarrassed him by talking to him in front of his friends. I know he does not want to be the teacher's pet.

I am wrong in my assumption. He comes to my room the next day during break. I attempt to compensate with humor for what I think is his embarrassment. I am unsuccessful, because according to him, he was not embarrassed. I do not like what he tells me.

"It's not safe," he says. "What if somebody that doesn't like me sees you talking to me? What if one of my friends doesn't like you? If I ignore you, it's not because I'm embarrassed, it's because I don't want you to get in any trouble."

"Maybe you should find new friends," I reply. I know as soon as I say this that it is my parents' response. I try to make up for it.

"Don't worry about me. I can take care of myself."

He shrugs, and I realize that he honestly believes what he is telling me. I also realize that I am not bullet-proof. I do not even know enough about his kind of lifestyle to know exactly what I need to be protected against.

I end with "I'll be more considerate of your feelings next time." It's a cop-out, and I know it.

He leaves, and I sit for a while thinking to myself that I am flailing about in a place I do not understand. I am frustrated because I drive from my comfortable world every morning to the other side of the earth. A side where teachers are shot in broad daylight, ten-year-olds carry beepers, and my favorite student wears grey coveralls to school every day.

Q

Politics

I stopped loving you last Thursday night
It wasn't at all like what I expected
like your hand making a hot white leap into my face
Lisa with a heart over the i accompanied by an out of town number
on the back of a restaurant receipt in your jeans' pocket
Or a stained woman's g-string tangled in the sheets at the bottom
of the bed
I had been cooking up these scenarios for years and was almost
looking forward to a dramatic finale
to watching the horror unfold nodding my head in a smug and world
weary way
Really I was disappointed by the anticlimactic fizzling out of
our relationship
It came to me in that aloof and yet mildly irritating sensation
you encounter when you finish a belated letter
have the address typed and the stamp in place
skimming the letter your self indulgent nature is revealed to you
through your own words
you're one of those people you can't stand who begins letters with
It was great to hear how you've been and proceed with four
pages of erroneous me stuff
It was like that with us
all the orbiting bits and pieces of our relationship were suddenly
suctioned to each other
and the result was monstrous
I had never really stopped to notice anything in the years we spent
indifferently getting in each other's way
Then it was the sweeping crime I saw each of us perpetrate
Unexpectedly I saw myself become desperate for some sign of recog-
nition from you
so craven I made myself into a wobbly stupid helpless woman thing
crawling into your lap and pushing my forehead to the pulse of
your neck
then slid my arms around you without any regard for self preser-
vation
pleading something I don't remember now
resigning myself
I had called off the Cold War
I knew you couldn't take your eyes off the tv
but I could be certain there was no hide away bridge between us
when you responded pointing to the remote at the screen to switch
from the news
and said something under your breath about politics

—Carolyn Hembree



Oil - 35.75" x 23.75"

Catherine Jones - *Still Life*

Artists and Poets

TORI COOK - is a karaoke diva who wants to one day teach theatre and acting to children.

AUDREY DUKE - is a senior education major who hopes to college French.

JULIE DYKES - is an English major, chemistry minor from Hoover. Her talents include floor dancing, big hair, and lipstick. Julie's current plans for the future include nursing school and eating cheesecake.

JULIE GIBBS - is a rising junior, painting major who is interested in English. She enjoys the good things in life, has no job plans, and wants to be her own boss.

HANK GRAVEL - is a promising young Rock & Roll icon and caffeine addict. A junior at BSC, he describes his photography as "a plate full of oreos and a tall glass of cold milk on a hot summer night."

LESLIE GRIMES - is a sophomore painting major, religion minor, who loves to paint outside.

GREG HAND - is a senior music major from Vestavia.

CAROLYN HEMBREE - queens.

BLAIR HUDDLESTON - is a native of Montgomery who is majoring in undecided. His haircut really isn't fruity. That was just artistic license.

CATHERINE JONES - is confused.

KIM LAMBERT - is a junior art major who like to wear blues, greens, and purples and paint with her fingers. She hopes to graduate someday and paint ostrich portraits and drink tons of coffee.

DEREK LICINA - is a biology major from Enterprise, Alabama who enjoys fishing.

BRIAN PATZ - is a biology/psychology major from HuntsVegas, Alabama whose career aspirations include being a pediatrician or a professional synchronized swimmer.

MIRJANA PAUKOVIC - is a graphic design major and computer science minor from Zagrab, Croatia.

ALLEN PETERSON - "Making art is part of my attempt to find and show the beauty and pain and joy that make up all of Life's processes."

JOSEPH POTTER - is a senior graphic design major from Pinson, Alabama who likes to travel.

EMILY WRIGHT - is a sophomore theatre/English major who enjoys interpretative dancing to Broadway show tunes.

